

2017 Employee advocacy impact study

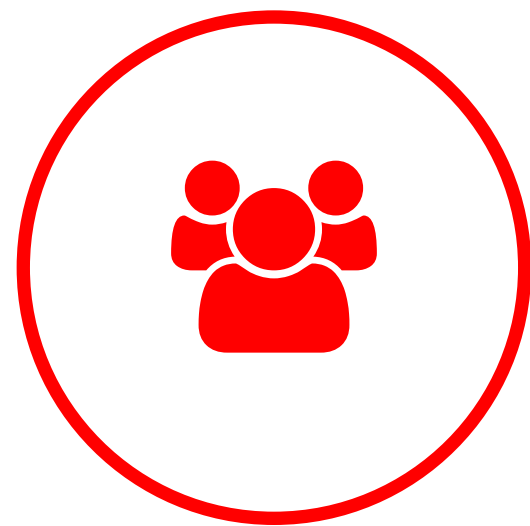


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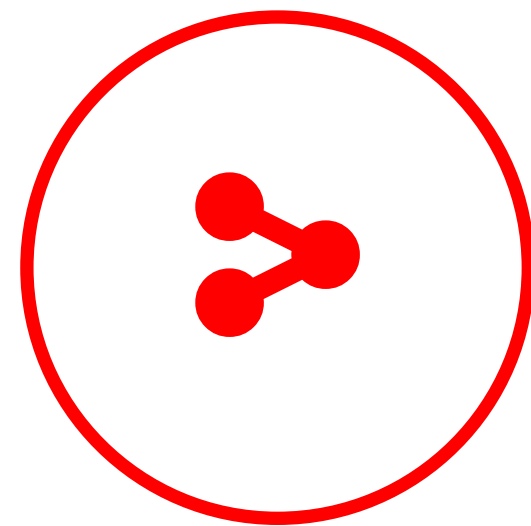
Marketers have a lot in common when it comes to employee advocacy. Sometimes it feels like the same, predictable employees share company news and insights. Other times we have a huge win and it feels like the whole company is engaged and fully supporting our efforts. Most of the time, however, employee advocacy efforts hit limits we'd all like to overcome.

The Marketing Advisory Network set out to find out what's holding employees back, and more importantly, what can be done to break through the barriers and drive more engagement. To achieve that goal, we went right to the source – surveying 499 employees from a wide range of organizations.

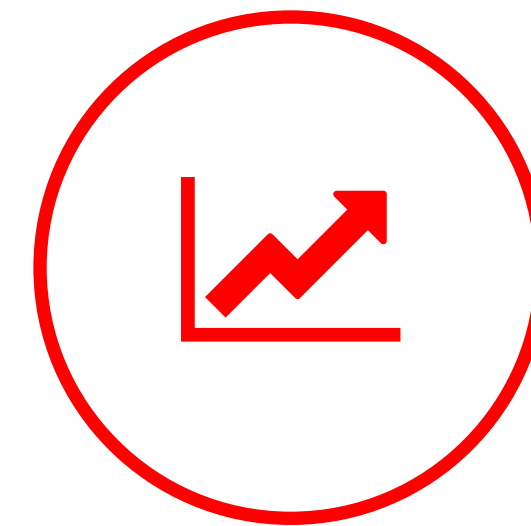
We found some remarkable truths.



Just like we have buyer personas, we need to develop employee personas. Many factors influence an employee's motivation and desire to advocate on behalf of the company.



Millennials aren't the only ones who get social. Gen X employees are very sophisticated in their digital sharing.



Those organizations that document social media guidelines have higher rates of employee advocacy.

We encourage you to dig deep into the study results where we answer many additional questions such as:

How does employee tenure effect social sharing?

Does publishing a personal blog indicate a higher propensity to share company news & insights?

What motivates employees to share more?

**LinkedIn reports
“In an average
company, only 3%
of employees share
company-related
content but they
are responsible
for driving a 30%
increase in the
content's total
likes, shares, and
comments.”¹**

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The significance of employee advocacy

Employee advocacy is not just another buzzword. It can be a revenue-generating, strategic program that drives brand awareness, attracts top talent and increases revenue.

- A study conducted by the Aberdeen Group revealed that companies with formal employee advocacy programs have a 26% increase in year over year revenue.²
- 44.5% of people report they are more likely to apply for a job if they saw their friend post about the position on social over other job lists.³
- Brand messages reach 561% further when shared by employees vs. the same message being shared by the brand's social channel. In fact, brand messages are re-shared 24X more frequently when employees share content.⁴

Why does employee advocacy work?

Employee advocacy is simply the promotion of company messages by its employees. While employee word of mouth has always contributed to a company's success; employee advocacy has gained more importance as both organizations and individuals have come to rely on social media to inform the buying process.

Employee advocates address two critical areas.

First, they extend the number of people who consume company messages.

Second, people trust content shared from employees more than they trust content coming directly from a brand, and in many cases other experts. The extra credibility employees bring with them is essential for spurring action. According to the 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer, employees are the most trusted resource.⁵

PRO TIP:

"Treat employees as stewards of your brand. They represent more than simply the workforce behind your product – they are what brings it to life for prospects and clients."

Katie Martell On-Demand Marketer



Essential elements of employee advocacy success

According to our Study, the majority of respondents, 78%, have said something positive about their employer to someone else directly. Conversely, only 24% have said something negative to someone else directly. However, only 27% of respondents have posted a positive comment or review online about their employer.

We can't help but ask ourselves.

What is required for social employee advocacy to take place?

Which, if any, of the following have you done?	
Said something positive about your employer to someone else directly	78%
Said something negative about your employer to someone else directly	24%
Posted a positive comment/review about your employer online	27%
Posted a negative comment/review about your employer online	2%
None of the above	11%

In our study we discovered that a variety of factors impact the frequency of an individual's advocacy. A clear roadmap for success emerged.

1 If you promote employee advocacy the same for each employee, you are missing the opportunity to grow participation. A wide range of factors contribute to employee advocacy. Not only do you need to offer a range of incentives, but also a range of content prompts.

2 Writing down social sharing guidelines increases advocacy.

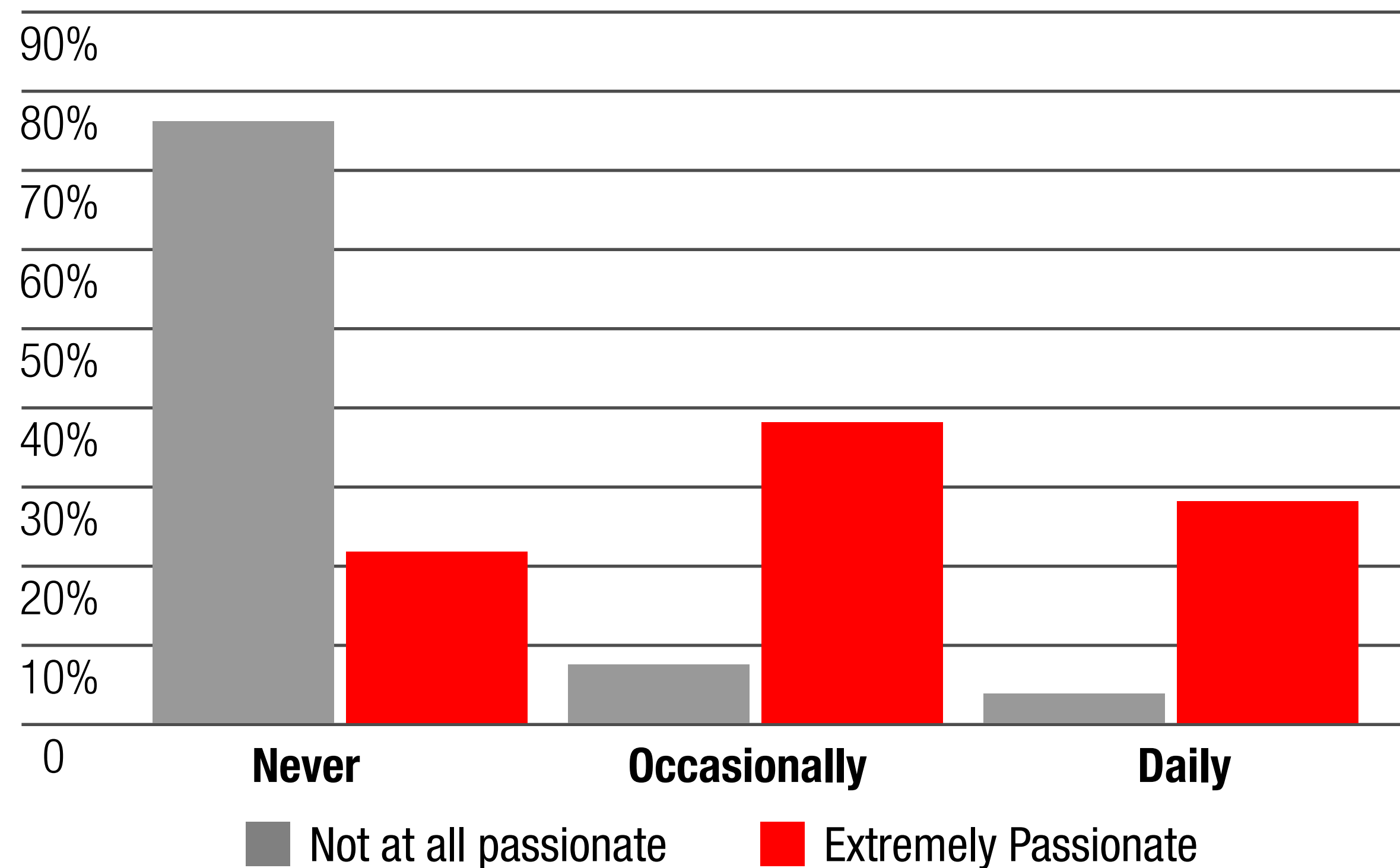
3 Employees contribute to a wide range of social channels. Even if your company does not have a dedicated presence on their channel of choice, you should make it easy for employees to contribute where they feel most comfortable.

4 You can grow the number of employees who participate in employee advocacy programs with incentive programs ranging from public recognition to monetary rewards.

A passionate workforce drives advocacy

If you want employees to become advocates for your organization, they need to first clearly understand and feel passionate about the values and vision of the company. Without a clear understanding of what the company stands for and the desired business objectives, employee advocacy is difficult to achieve

On average, how often do you share information about your company or your job on your social networks?



▶ Periodically poll your employees to assess their level of passion for the company and their role. This insight will help you craft company vision training and incentive programs that will drive greater advocacy.

PRO TIP:

"Training employees on the corporate mission and sharing the organization's vision isn't an option, it is a must. Great leadership builds great organizations."

Erika Goldwater Marketing Executive

2017 Employee advocacy impact study

Working remotely increases an employee's company related social sharing



We asked survey participants where they worked most often. They chose one of the following options:

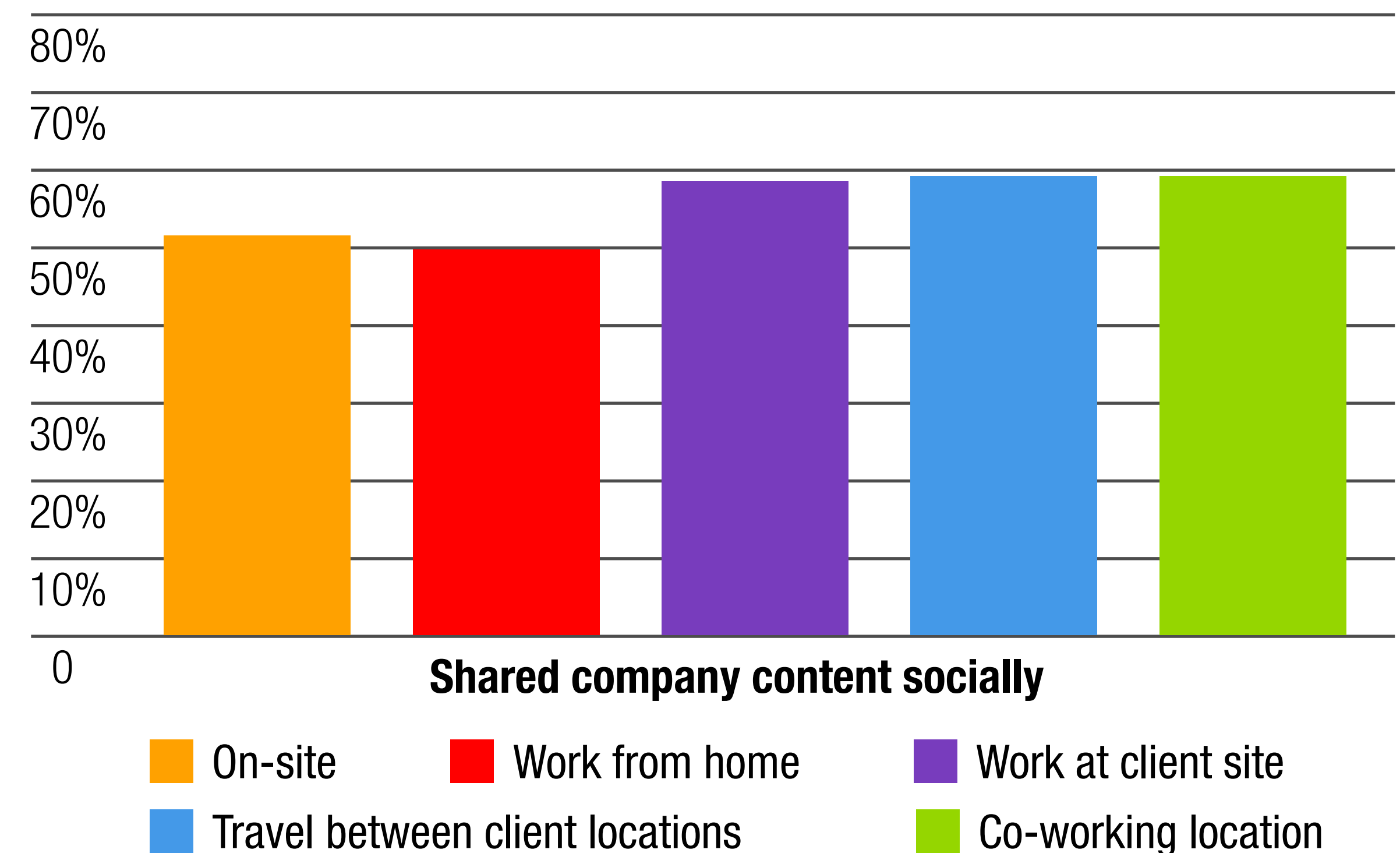
- At a company location
- At a client location
- Traveling between client locations
- At home
- At a co-working location

Who do you think shared company messages via social channels most often? It wasn't those at a company location as we suspected. It turns out those that work on client sites or travel between them, were the most frequent social sharers.

Surprisingly, only 13% of those at a company location shared content with their social networks about professional interests between 4 – 10 times in the last month. Compared to 32% at a client location, and 25% traveling between client locations.

➤ Those who spend time with non-employees doing their job tend to be more frequent employee advocates online.

We aimed to understand which employee, the on-site or work-from-home, was more likely to share company related social content. We found that 50% of work-from-home employees reported that they shared no company content and 48% of on-site employees did the same. Those who travel for work were most active. Only 32% of those at a client location reported no professional social posts in the last month, those traveling between client locations and those at a co-working location both came in at 31%.

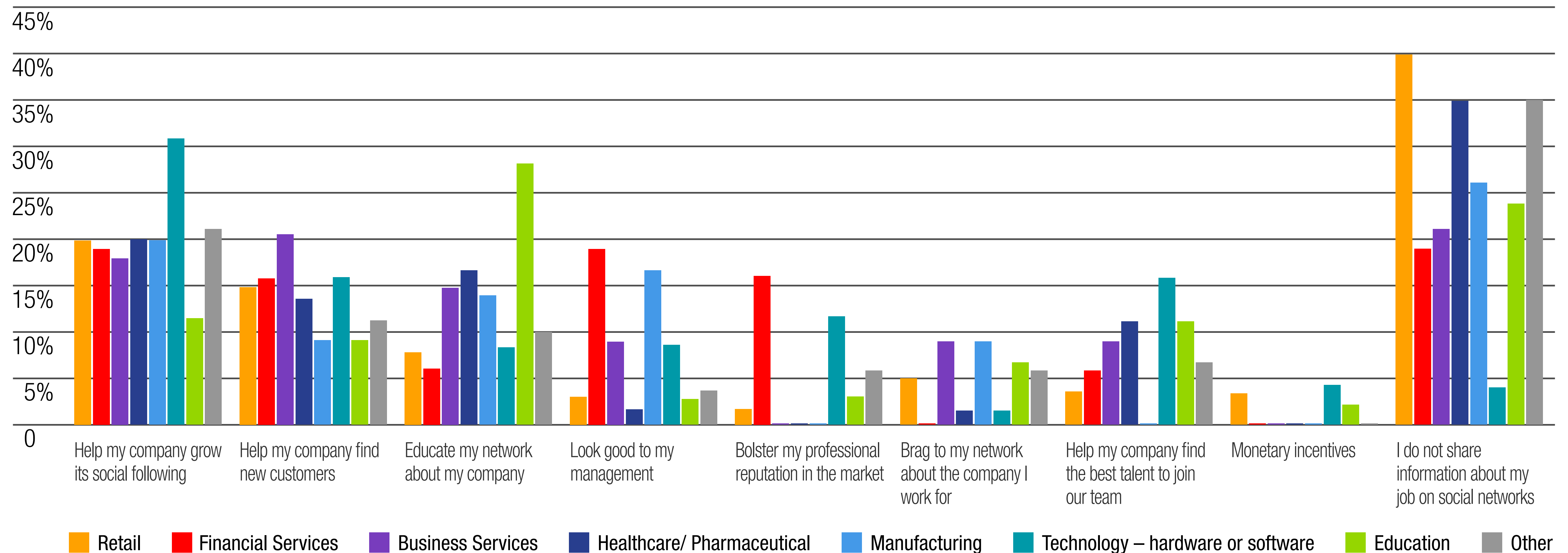


Understanding employee motivation by industry

Employees want to help their company grow

Most organizations have employees that span multiple generations. We wanted to understand if the generation to which they belonged had any impact on why employees advocated on behalf of their company. We also wanted to know if employees in specific industries were more likely to engage in advocacy than others.

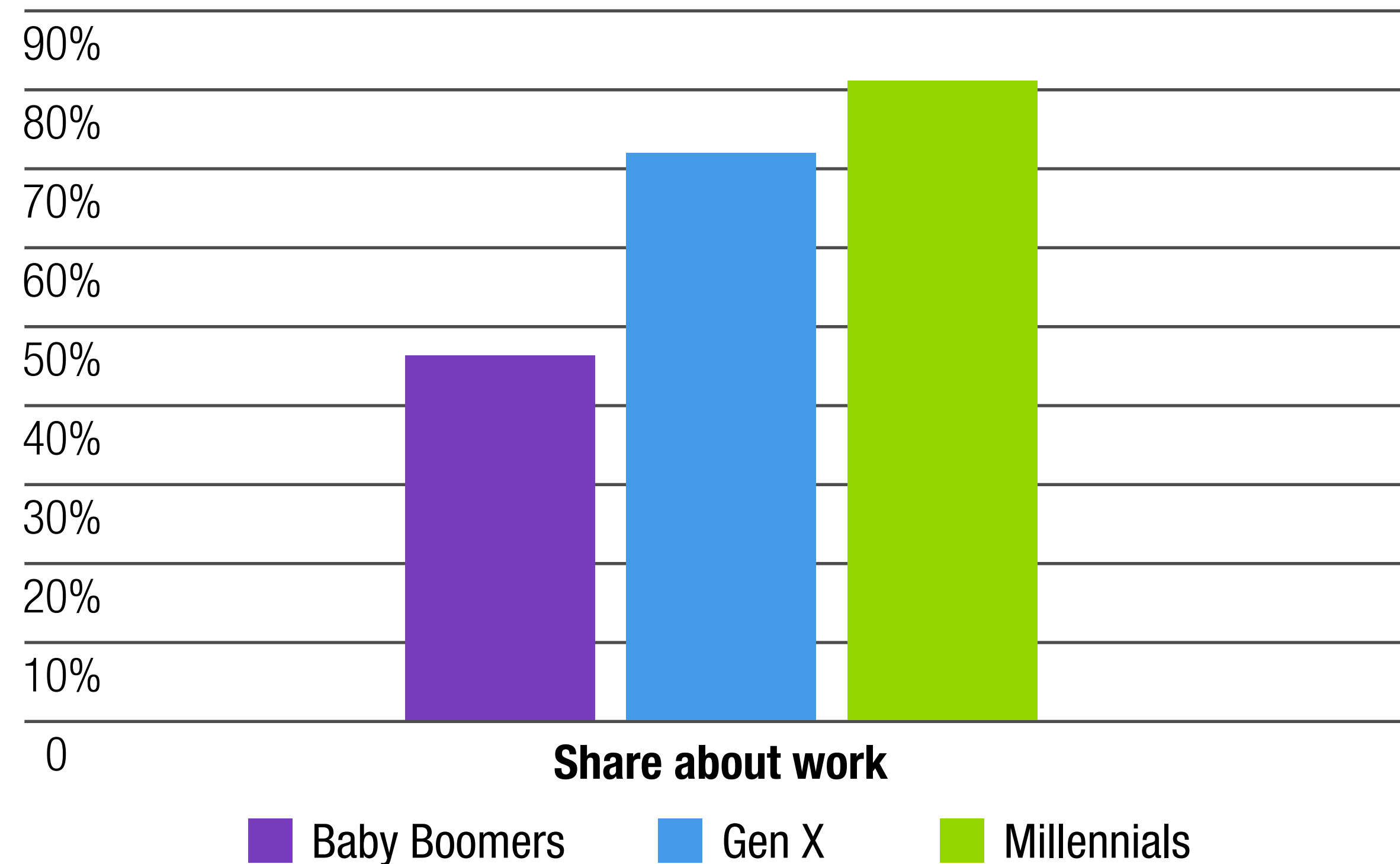
We asked participants, “What is the primary reason you share or would share information about your company?” and broke down the responses by the industry to which their company belongs.



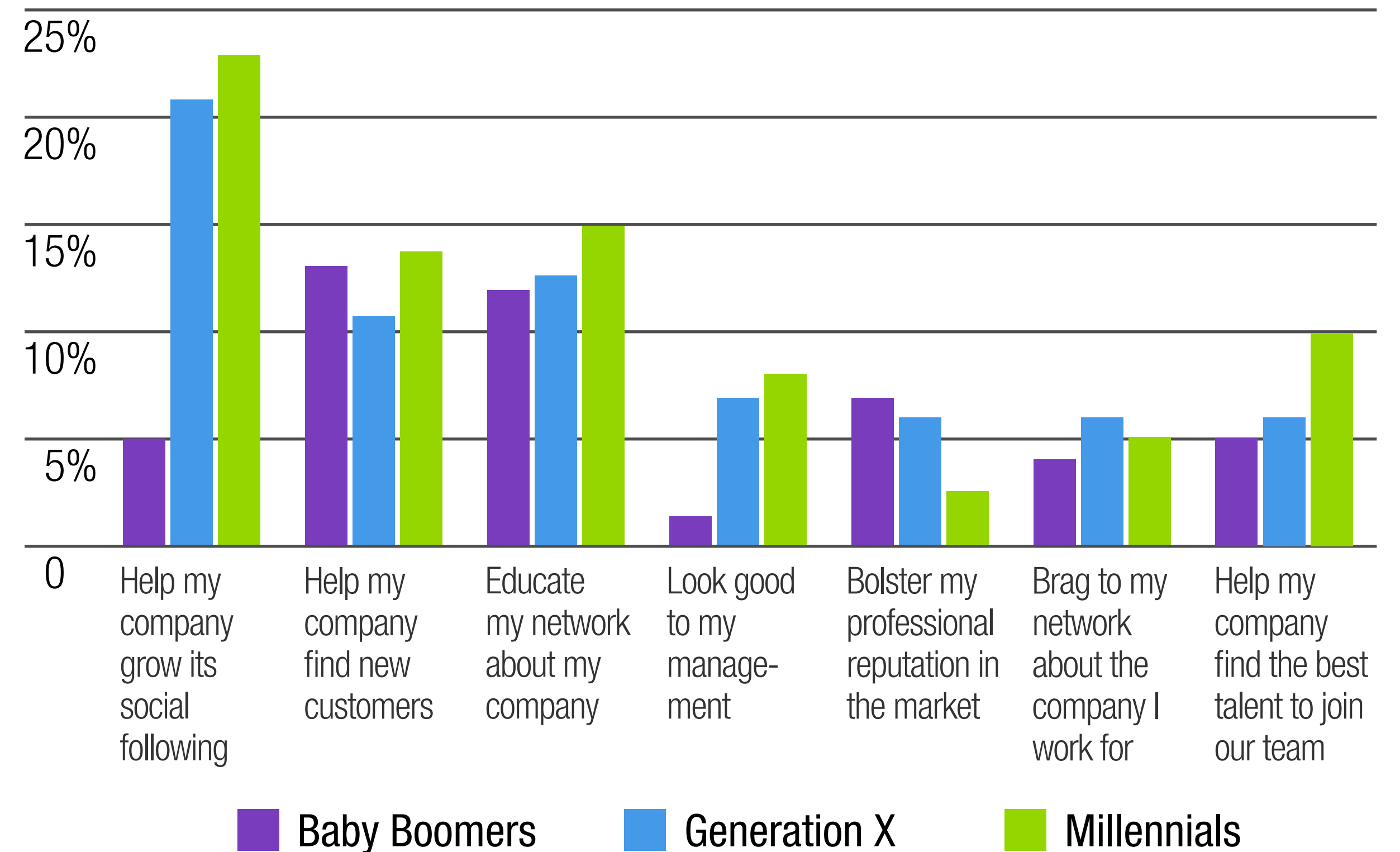
Understanding employee motivation by generation



We also broke down the responses by generation. Which generation is the most likely to be an employee advocate and share content socially? You won't be surprised to learn that Baby Boomers were the most likely not to share information. Only 47% of Baby Boomers share information about their job, compared to 72% of Generation X and 81% of Millennials.



Millennials are more motivated than their peers to help their company find quality talent as a motivator, but were on par with Generation X when it came to the number one motivation – helping the company grow its social following.



We also compared the type of company information each generation reports sharing. Baby Boomers are far more likely to share information only about themselves than other generations. Millennials are the most likely to post about company outings and activities, the more culture driven aspects of work.

		Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
What types of content would you prefer to share about your company?	News about the company's growth	13%	22%	24%
	Upcoming events in which my company participates	13%	23%	30%
	Job postings	18%	28%	27%
	Accomplishments related specifically to my job	16%	20%	30%
	Content related to my job function	13%	17%	16%
	New customer wins or case studies	4%	11%	12%
	Community service, philanthropy or good deeds the company	16%	19%	27%
	Company outings and activities	8%	17%	25%
	Information about our products	16%	27%	25%
	Special promotions/discounts	3%	20%	25%
	Content about our industry authored by an employee or executive	4%	12%	6%
	General content about our industry	11%	20%	18%
	None of the above. I only share information about myself.	47%	24%	17%

PRO TIP:

"Social media has changed the branding and promotion game. Employees are the new secret weapon for helping to get your company out in front."

Beverly Chiarelli Director of Marketing

Understanding employee motivation by function



A person's role also plays a factor in the type of information they wish to share.

What department do you work in?

What types of content would you prefer to share about your company?	What department do you work in?							
	Marketing	Sales	Finance	Operations	Customer Service/Support	Development/Engineering	IT	Other (please specify)
News about the company's growth	25%	21%	43%	20%	13%	43%	26%	14%
Upcoming events in which my company participates	19%	25%	29%	27%	22%	19%	26%	21%
Job postings	13%	22%	31%	32%	22%	33%	29%	23%
Accomplishments related specifically to my job	19%	32%	20%	25%	17%	29%	22%	22%
Content related to my job function	19%	11%	11%	17%	11%	29%	25%	15%
New customer wins or case studies	19%	10%	17%	4%	6%	14%	26%	5%
Community service, philanthropy or good deeds the company	19%	16%	26%	25%	18%	33%	21%	21%
Company outings and activities	13%	10%	26%	20%	18%	24%	27%	14%
Information about our products	13%	32%	29%	18%	22%	38%	36%	20%
Special promotions/discounts	25%	29%	17%	15%	16%	24%	36%	8%
Content about our industry authored by an employee or executive	6%	14%	11%	2%	8%	10%	14%	8%
General content about our industry	31%	13%	14%	16%	16%	19%	26%	17%
None of the above. I only share information about myself.	13%	25%	6%	27%	36%	10%	16%	31%

Case Study: Growing employee participation

This 50-person software company did what many marketing teams do—they sent a daily email out to the company with pre-written Tweets and LinkedIn shares for employees to push through their networks. At first these were helpful in boosting engagement, but soon it became apparent the same 15-20% of the organization was participating and no one else.

That's when we decided to do some digging. During the research we discovered, employees behaved more aligned to their personal brand than their role in the company:

- Some wanted to be seen as industry experts.
- Others were driven to boast that they worked for an excellent company.
- Others still wanted to share news only when they could tie it directly to their personal achievements.

PRO TIP:

"Companies have long looked to senior executives to serve as brand ambassadors externally, but social media has flattened organizations' engagement with the outside world and put employees of all levels on the front lines. Smart organizations should think about how social can be used for employee advocacy programs not just as a recruiting tool, but also to demonstrate an organization's value to customers, prospects, investors, and other stakeholders.

To make this most impactful, consider identifying a small group of "rock stars" who are already active and well connected on social channels and who can act as an extension of the corporate social media team. They should represent a wide range of departments, levels and, if relevant, geographies so their messages resonate with your entire workforce. Give them advance access to news and new programs that they can share early on their channels, arm them with graphics and relevant hashtags, and provide them with freedom to present an "insider's view" of your company. It should also be a two-way street: the brand should promote the "rock stars" personal posts on corporate channels-- a great way to reward their participation."

Katelyn Holbrook Vice President at Version 2.0 Communications

Understanding that staff were motivated by different things was eye opening and changed how they engaged. Instead of daily blasts that went to everyone, marketing aligned specific pieces of newsworthy content to groups of people 1-2 times per week based on their personal brand goals. In some cases, the same news was shared across multiple internal personas but the wording and imagery in the suggested Tweets and shares was different. To kick-start their renewed efforts, they ran a social contest with fun prizes to gauge the effectiveness of social contents and incentives.

Within 60 days, they had twice as many people participate in advocacy efforts than in the previous two quarters.

Are blog authors more social on behalf of their company?



In assessing social media engagement, we sought to understand if there was a correlation between generation and blog authorship. Almost a quarter of our survey respondents have a personal blog. While far fewer Baby Boomers have a blog, Generation X and Millennials were neck and neck.

Do you publish a personal blog?	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
	%	%	%
Yes	7	22	25

▶ While many factors contribute to an employee's commitment to publishing a personal blog, there is one that employers can facilitate. Of those that had a personal blog, 83% worked for a company that had provided written guidelines about sharing company information on social media, compared to just 39% of those that did not.

We wanted to know if those with a personal blog were more or less likely to share company information socially.

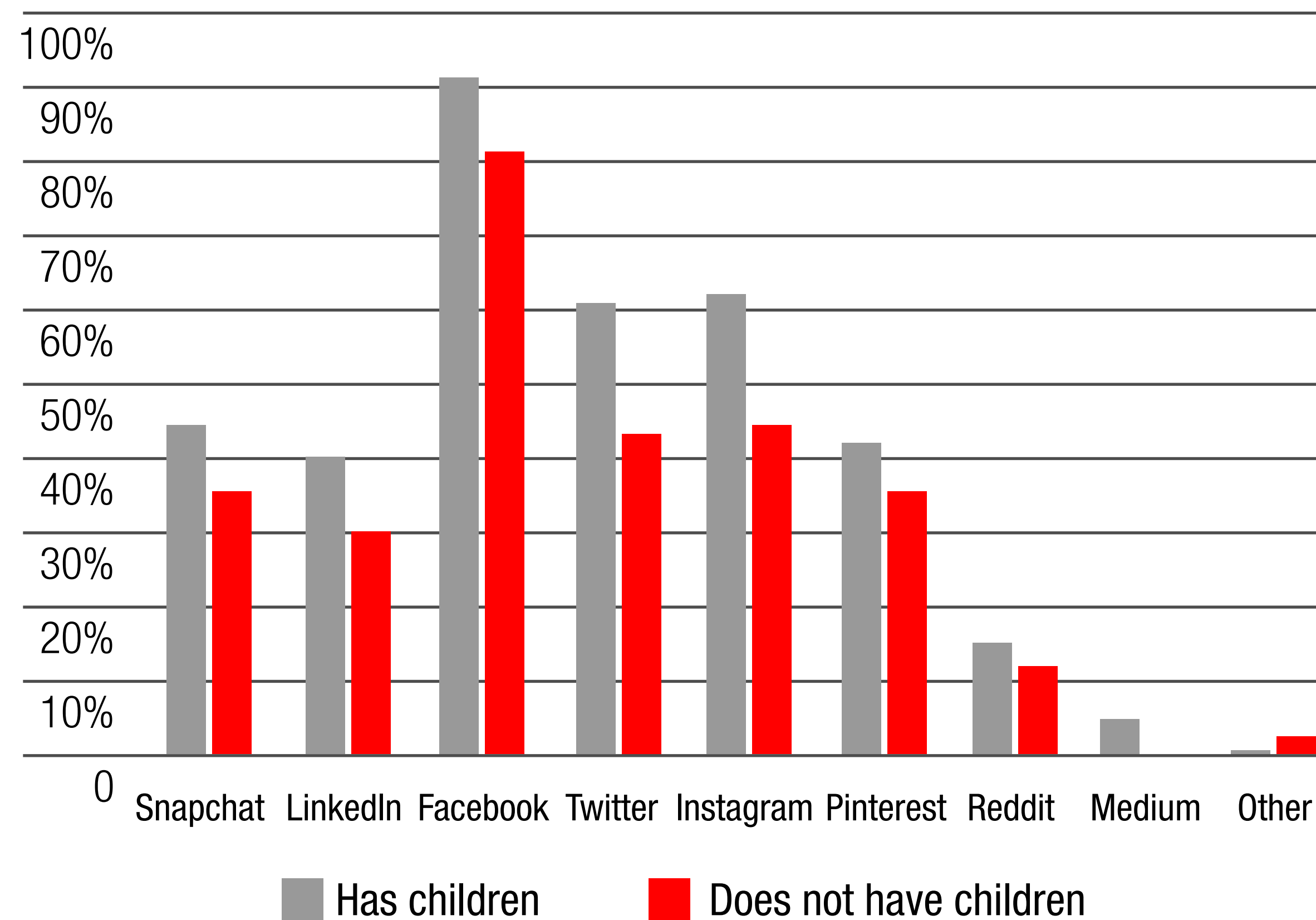
On average, how often do you share information about your company or your job on your social networks?	Publishes a personal blog	Does NOT publish a personal blog
	%	%
Never	12	54
Once a week	29	13
Occasionally	38	30
Daily	22	4

Very clearly publishing a personal blog is a leading indicator that an employee is more inclined to advocate on behalf of the company socially.

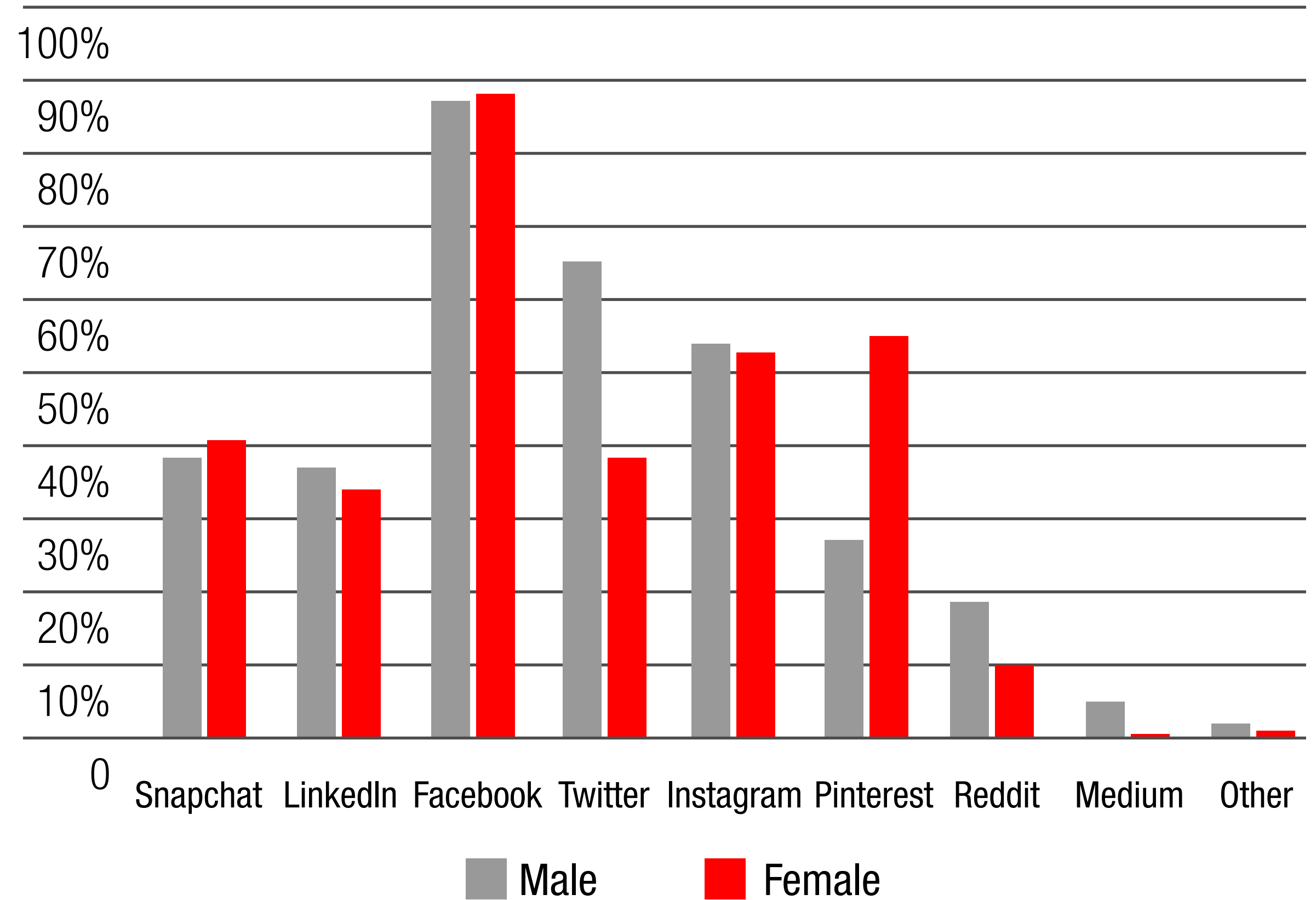
Social channel adoption by segment

Employees Advocate Across a Wide Range of Social Channels

Those employees with children report use of more social channels than those without children.



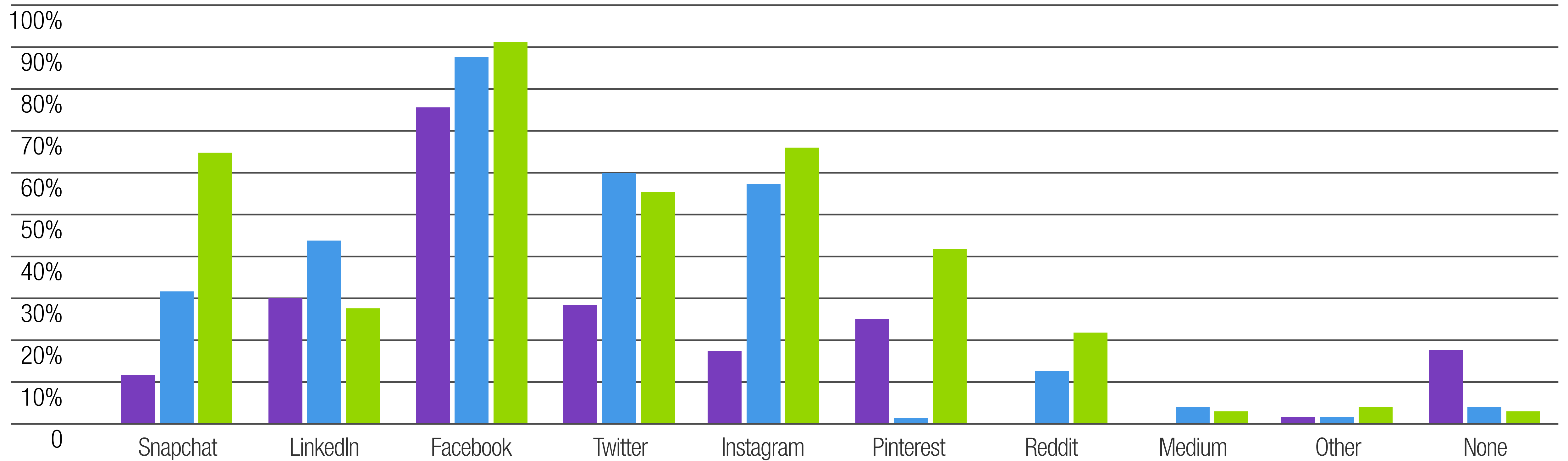
Parenting wasn't the only difference. Gender played a role in which social channels were used.



Social channel adoption by segment

Generation also played into the variety of social channels individuals utilized.

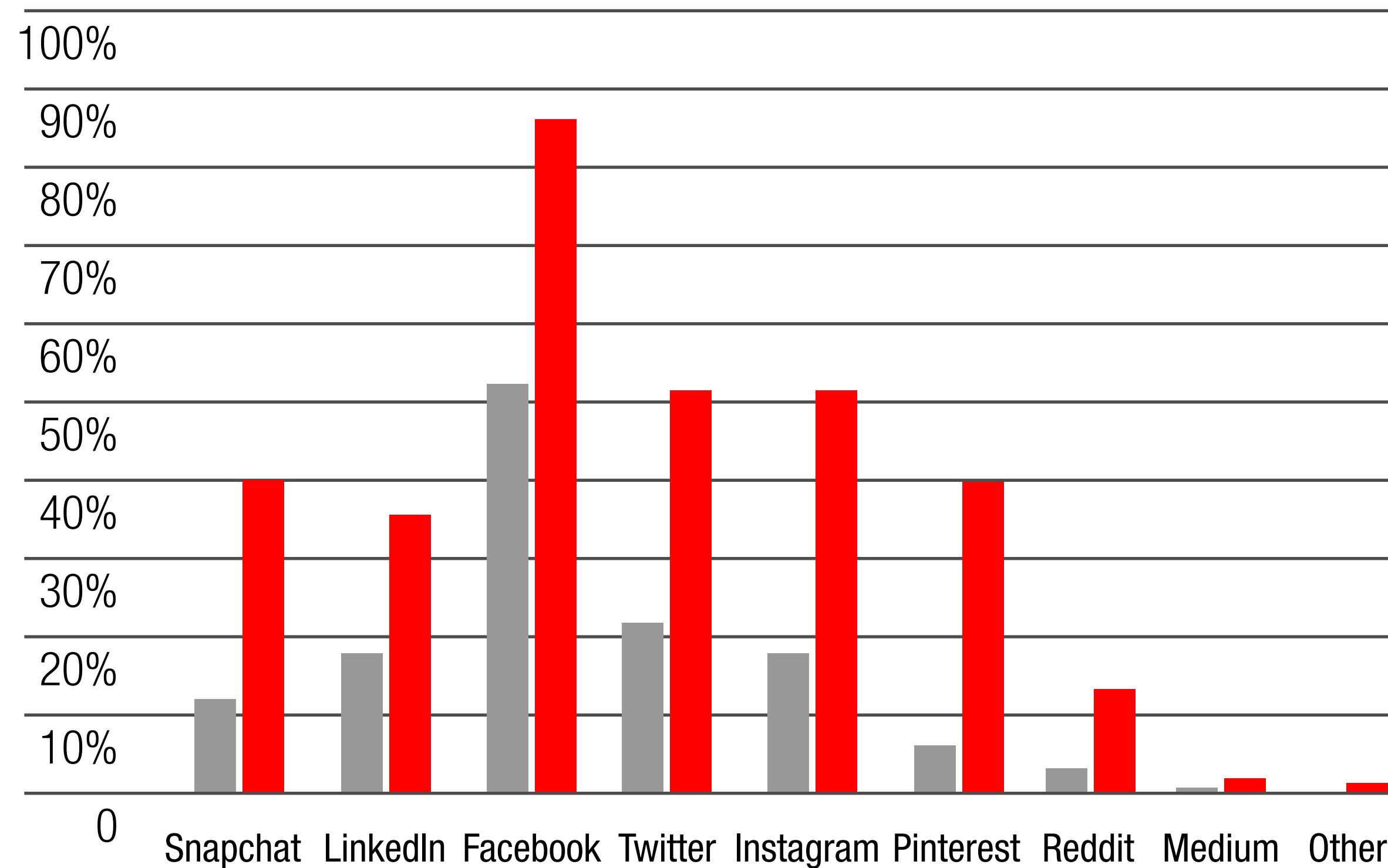
 Baby Boomers  Generation X  Millennials



Social channel adoption by segment

We also asked participants to share where they did or would share information about their company or work.

The most commonly used social media channel by far was Facebook at 87% according the Study. However, 54% of respondents were also on Instagram and Twitter with Snapchat (41%) and Pinterest (40%) and then LinkedIn (36%).



■ On what networks do you or would you share information about your company or your work?
 ■ On which of the following social channels do you have a profile or account?

Employees across varied educational backgrounds are socially active. However, the most frequent contributors to company advocacy are those with Master's or Doctorate degrees.

	High School diploma, GED or equivalent	Some college	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctorate
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Never	57	56	43	45	26	28
Once a week	15	13	17	16	19	22
Occasionally	25	31	28	31	41	28
Daily	3	0	13	8	14	22

New employees are reluctant to advocate

Employees who have been at the company less than a year are hesitant to engage in company advocacy. In fact, 63% of new employees report they never share company messages socially, compared to 54% of those with 1 – 3 years of employment with the company, and 24% of those who have 4 – 6 years of tenure.

► It takes time for new employees to feel comfortable advocating on behalf of the company. Employers can short-cut the delay by building social guidance in new hiring training.

While the size of a company had little to no impact on employee behavior when it came to adoption of social advocacy, the amount of emphasis placed on educating the employees did.

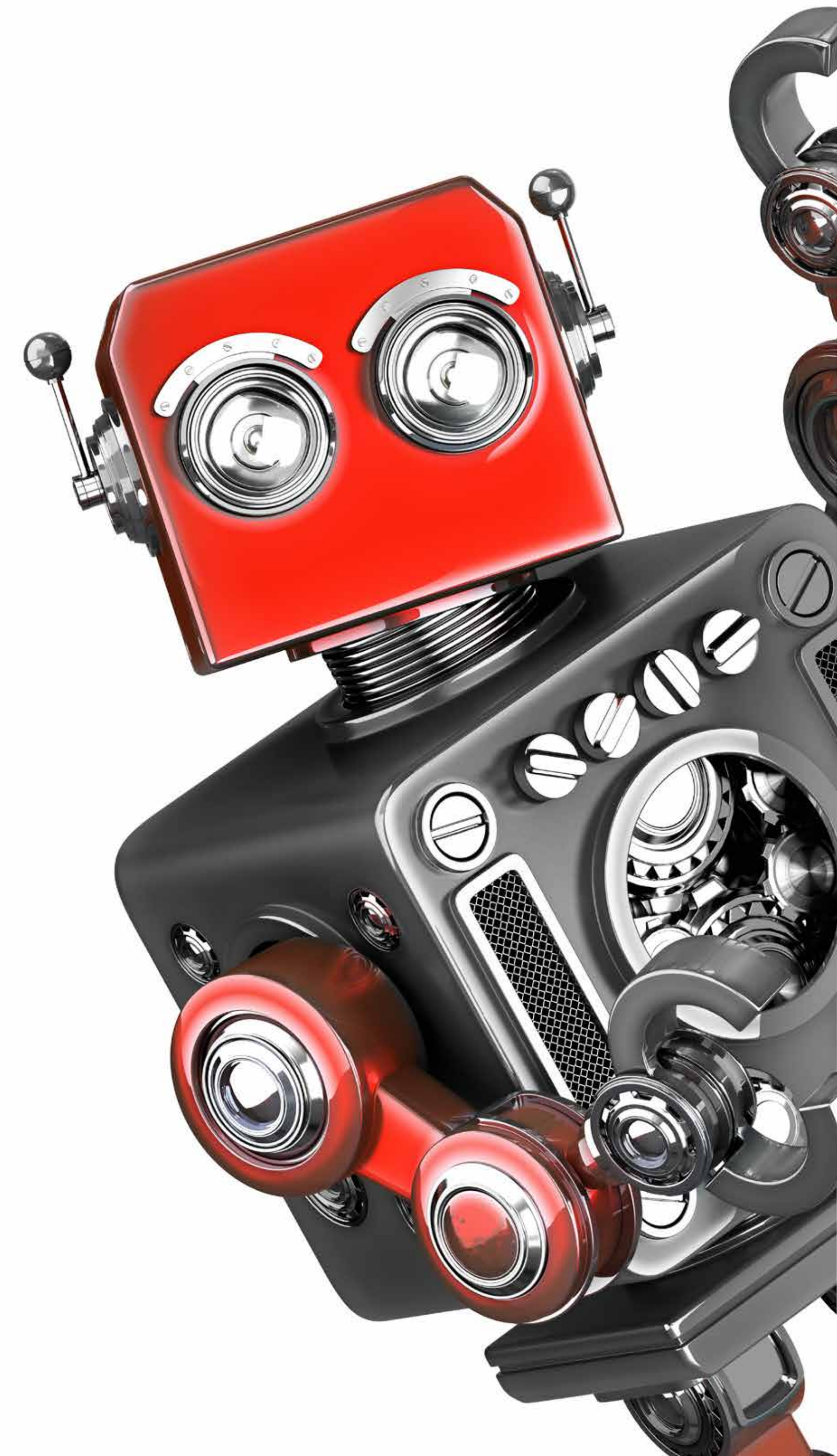
Has your company provided any written guidance or training on sharing company information on social media?	Yes	No
	%	%
None	39	69
1 – 3 times	24	21
4 – 10 times	20	8
11 – 15 times+	17	2

This is likely because those with written guidelines have done a better job helping employees understand how social advocacy impacts the company. Those with written guidelines say they advocate socially to help the company grow its social following 28% of the time, compared to just 12% of those who have no written guidelines.

Your Employees are Not Automation Robots. Content Prompts and Advocacy Education Will Increase Participation

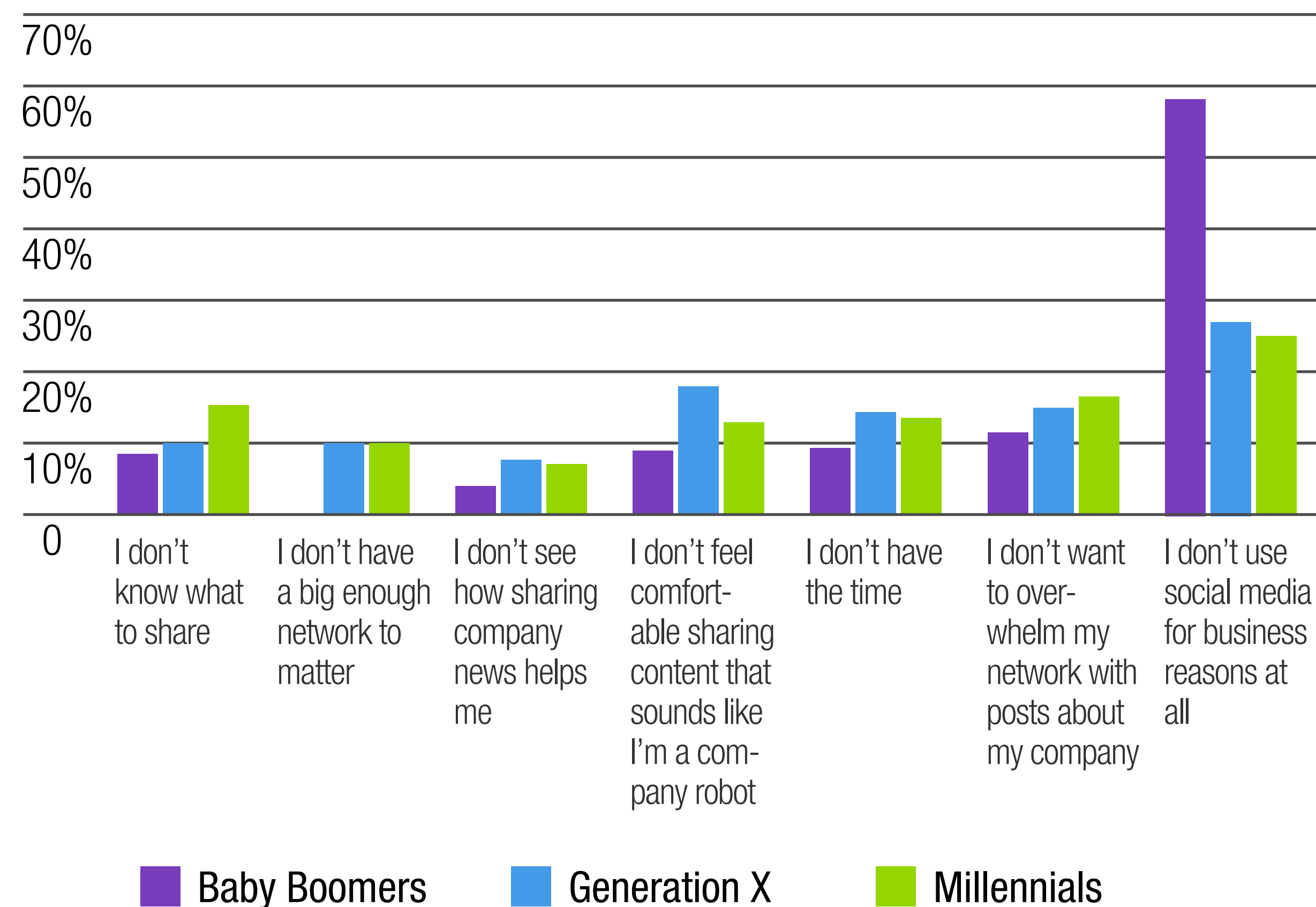
According to the Study, there are many obstacles keeping participants from sharing company information on social media. The biggest obstacle for one third of respondents (30%) was they do not use social media for business reasons. Additionally, 15% do not want to overwhelm their network with posts about their company or sound like a company robot, while 14% report they don't have time. Some don't know what to share and less than 10% don't have a big enough network or see how sharing helps them.

What is the biggest obstacle keeping you from sharing more information about your company?	I don't know what to share	12%
	I don't have a big enough network to matter	8%
	I don't see how sharing company news helps me	6%
	I don't feel comfortable sharing content that sounds like I'm a company robot	15%
	I don't have time	14%
	I don't want to overwhelm my network with posts about my company	15%
	I don't use social media for business reasons at all	30%



Employee advocacy obstacles & incentives

Breaking it down by generation provides helpful context. Millennials may be most comfortable on social channels when it comes to personal outreach, but they don't always know what professional content to share.



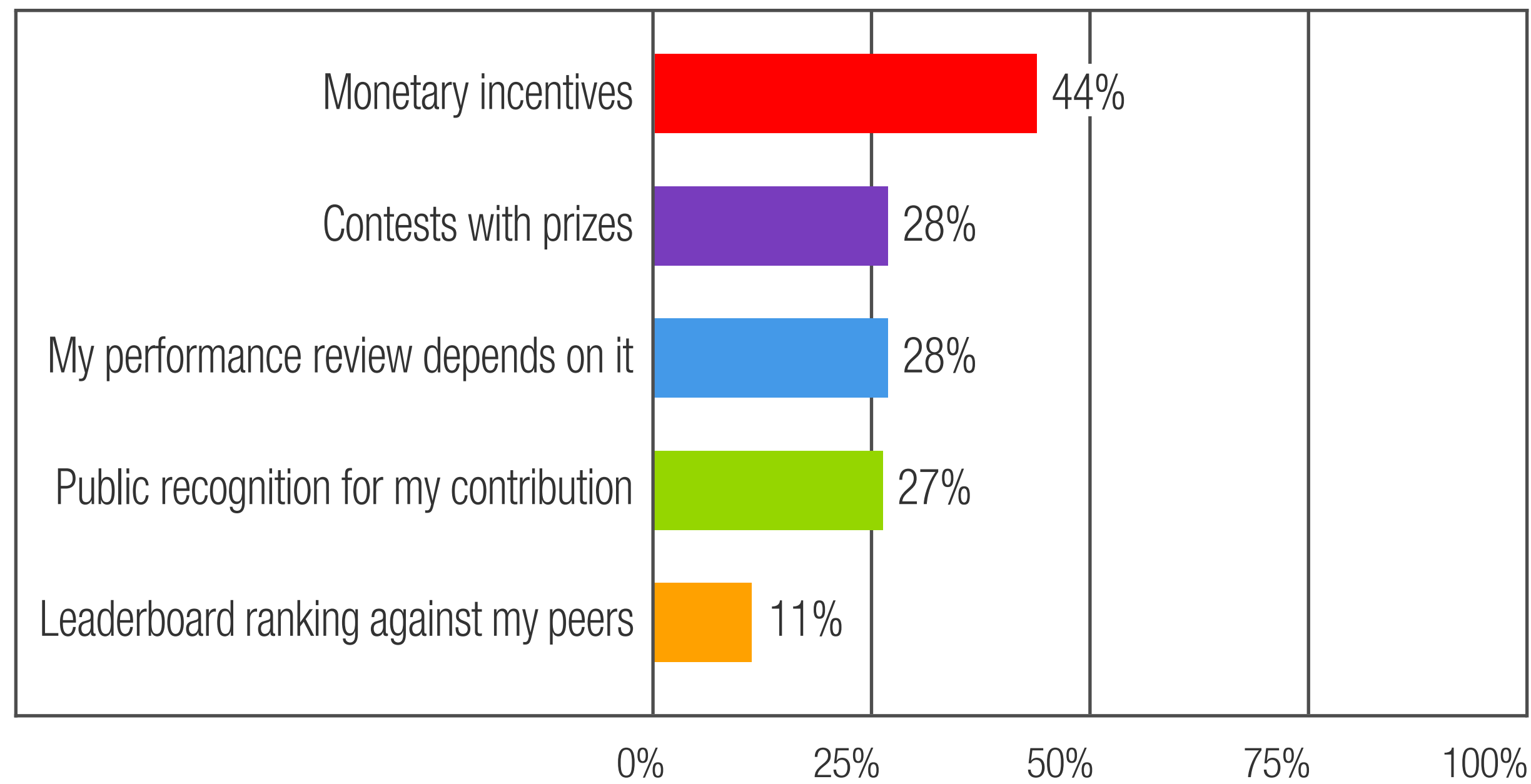
In addition to content prompts helping employees understand what to share and education about employee advocacy's role in growing the company, we explored the role incentive programs could play. Monetary incentives prove a valuable way to encourage participation.

PRO TIP:

"I see a sweet spot for both employer brand content and brand journalism efforts within an employee advocacy program. Both are excellent initiatives for social recruiting, but also for positioning your company as thought leaders. Extend your content strategy to include the expertise and voice of the entire organization; you will demonstrate to your employees that you're their advocate, and the data indicates they will reciprocate."

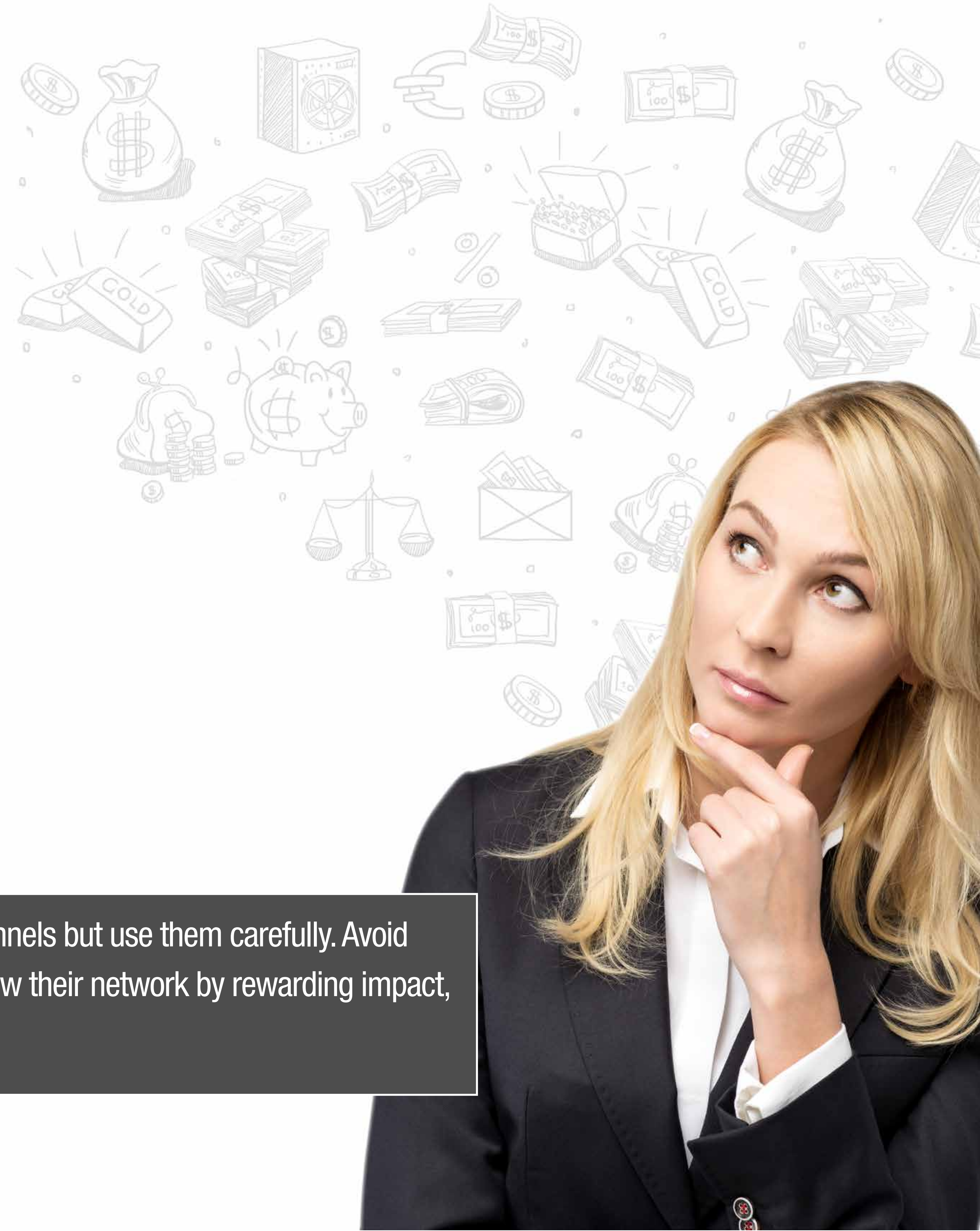
Stephan Hovnanian Contact Solutions Architect, Bambu by Sprout Social

Employee advocacy obstacles & incentives



As the data clearly shows, organizations can benefit from utilizing employee advocacy in their organizations. Although many organizations will look to implement in-house programs through clearly defined, written guidelines and training, others may seek to utilize software solutions to help standardize and enable more systematic advocacy practices. Several vendors offer solutions to help develop employee advocacy programs including Engagelyee, Everyone Social, Sociabble, eeedo, Bambu by Sprout Social, LinkedIn Elevate, Nine Connections, Limber, Smarp and Dynamic Signal.

➤ Monetary rewards will incent employees to share content on their social channels but use them carefully. Avoid “paying per post” but rather focus on supporting an employee’s efforts to grow their network by rewarding impact, and integrating payments into a larger bonus plan if one is available.



The survey process

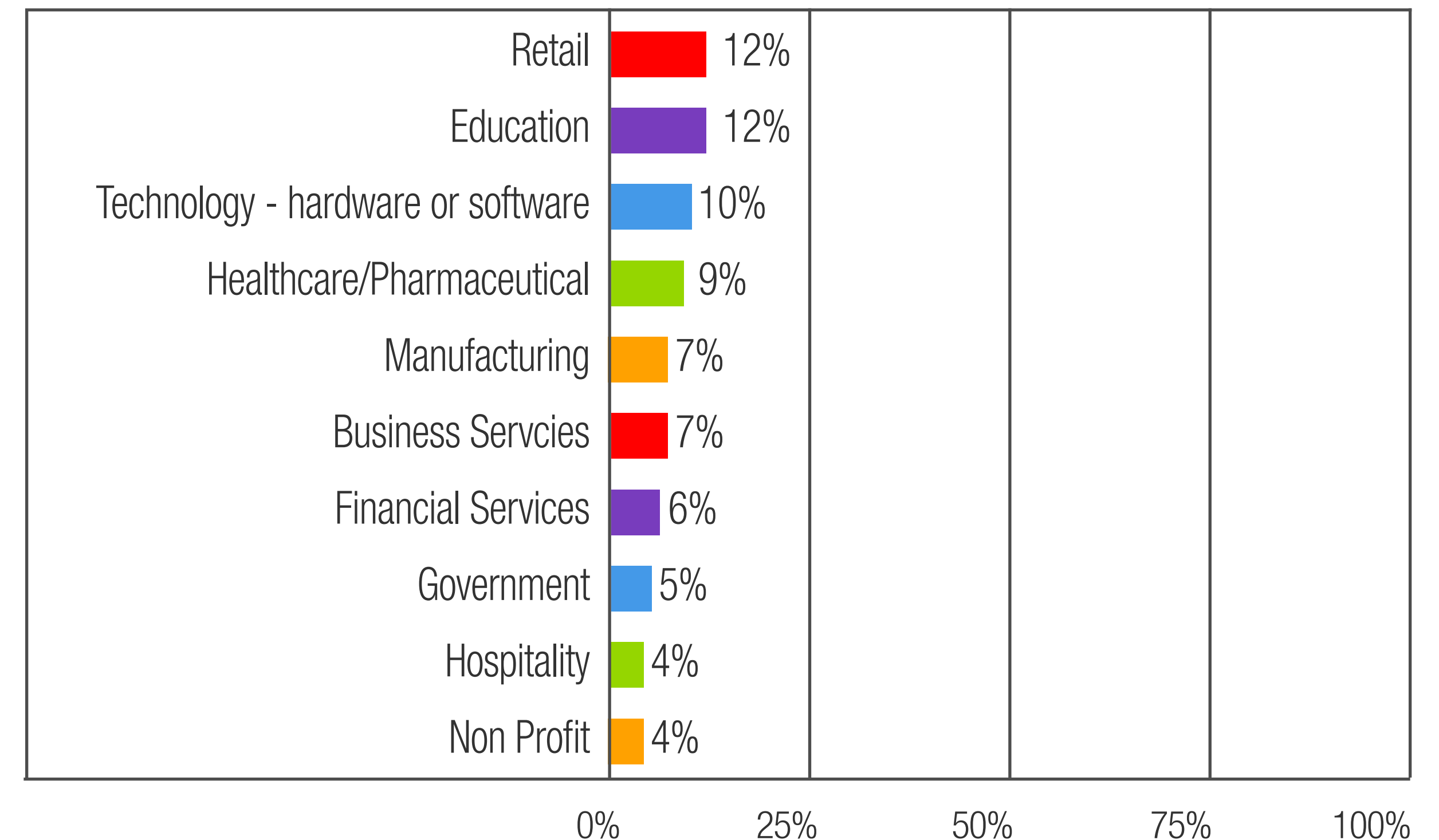
The Marketing Advisory Network online survey was conducted over a one-week period in April of 2017 and queried 499 professionals across all industries in both SMB and enterprise organizations. Respondents worked in a variety of departments including IT, marketing, engineering, sales and others. The survey results were not weighted. Respondents were quota-sampled using 32 different cells (gender by age and by region) to closely match the overall national population of those aged 18 years old and up. The respondents were 46% female and 54% male.

The respondents tended to be from three generations with Baby Boomers representing 15%, Generation X with the majority at 50% and Millennials representing 35%. There were no respondents from the Greatest Generation, nor the Silent Generation.

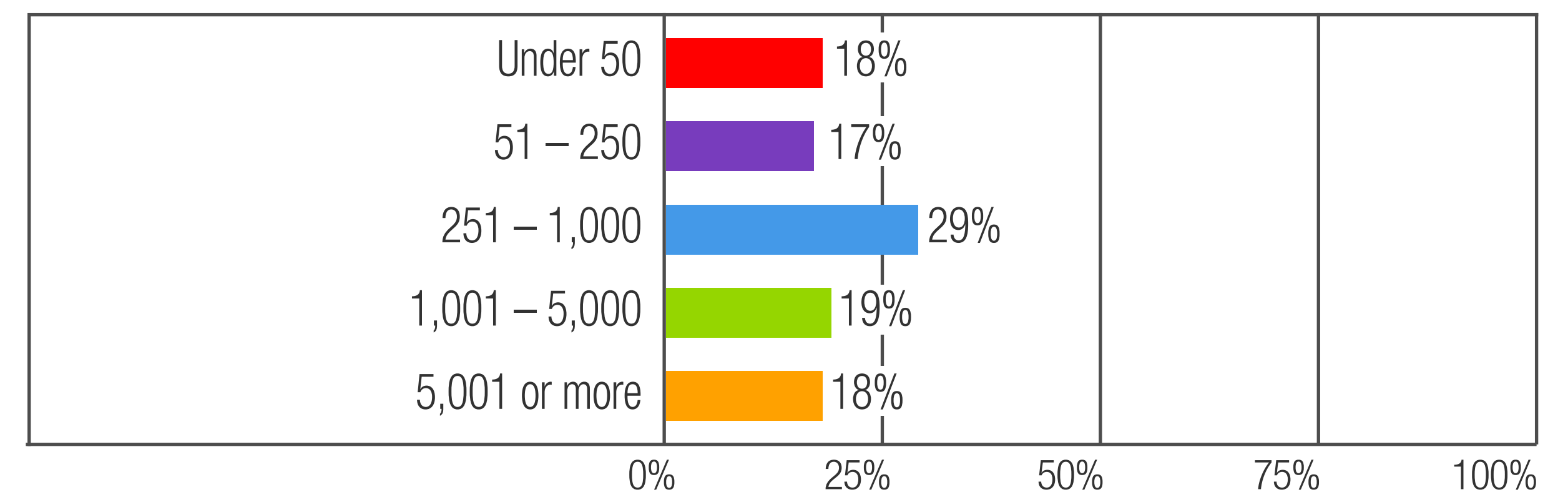
All participants were currently employed by a company. 83% of participants were employed full time, 17% part time.

We included responses from a range of industries.

What is the primary industry of your company? – Top 10



And from organizations of all sizes.





Samantha Stone, author of *Unleash Possible: A Marketing Playbook that Drives Sales* is a revenue catalyst who helps unleash the possible in organizations that have complex selling processes. She's a fast-growth, B2B marketing junkie, author, speaker, consultant and persona coach who has also managed to find time to raise four boys with her husband, David. Throughout her career she has launched go-to-market initiatives and led marketing strategies for award-winning, high-growth companies including Netezza, SAP, Ascential Software and Powersoft. In 2012 she founded The Marketing Advisory Network to help savvy business leaders unleash the possible within their enterprises.

Follow her [@samanthastone](#) or connect on [LinkedIn](#). Each month Samantha publishes new tools. Sign up [here](#) to get on the list.

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End notes

- 1 <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/blog/linkedin-elevate/2016/why-content-marketing-needs-employee-advocacy>
- 2 Aberdeen Group research "FROM EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TO EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY: A NATURAL PROGRESSION" August 2016
- 3 <https://getbambu.com/data-reports/deep-disconnect-hr-report/>
- 4 <https://www.scribd.com/doc/249863818/Infographic-Social-Employee-Advocacy>
- 5 <http://www.edelman.com/global-results/>